

Quarterly Progress Report

Project Name: Winter Ecology and Response of Gunnison Sage-grouse to Livestock Grazing in San Juan County, Utah.

Utah State University Control Number:

Period Covered: December 2003 through February 2004

Project Investigators: Sharon Ward and Terry Messmer

Agency Contract Number:

Agency Project Officer: Dean Mitchell

Submitted To: Dean Mitchell and Tammy Wallace

Date Submitted: March 2004

A new part-time technician was hired mid February 2004 to help with bird locations.

Winter locations on radio-collared birds have been obtained starting in November 2003 and concluded the end of February 2004. Birds have been located throughout this time period exclusively in sagebrush, including Wyoming sagebrush patches with some black sagebrush (BLM). Radio collared birds associated with the Hickman lek area have remained on BLM and Adams property in Wyoming sagebrush and black sagebrush. One female and one male associated with the Roring lek have remained with the flock of birds from the Hickman area throughout the winter.

Radio contact has been lost with two males and one female during this time. The birds were captured and collared in March/April 2002 and I believe their batteries have died. One male bird with a mortality signal obtained from an aerial telemetry flight was heard in January 2004. The body was not recovered despite multiple ground searches and another aerial flight. The signal could not be picked up again. This male bird also was collared in March/April 2002.

A total of 12 birds currently have functioning radio collars. I expect to lose two more batteries in the next couple of months. Spring captures will begin mid March. I hope to recapture two hens and replace their collars.

Winter vegetation characteristics were obtained in bird and random locations. Snow has accumulated in the study area. In some locations, the snow has measured approximately 25 cm. The birds have dug out "nests" in the snow and appear to remain in these nests

for long periods of time as indicated by the large roost piles. Snow depths have ranged from zero to approximately 25 cm.

Viewing tours and evening presentations are scheduled for March 27th, 2004 and April 10th, 2004. The next SWOG meeting is scheduled for mid April.